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## Executive Summary

### Purpose and Use of the Comprehensive Plan

This Comprehensive Plan provides a written guide for investing in the future of Mathews County over the next twenty years. In Virginia, every governing body must adopt a comprehensive plan to identify community resources, needs and trends of growth in order to encourage orderly development. The adopted plan must be reviewed every five years.

*Code of Virginia, Title 15.2, Chapter 22:*

*Section 15.2-2223 – “The local planning commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction. In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and trends of growth, and of the probable future requirements of its territory and inhabitants. The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities. The comprehensive plan shall be general in nature, in that it shall designate the general or approximate location, character, and extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation improvement, shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use as the case may be...”*

*Section 15.2-2230 – “At least once every five years the comprehensive plan shall be reviewed by the local planning commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan.”*

*Section 15.2-2232 – “Whenever a local planning commission recommends a comprehensive plan or part thereof for the locality and such plan has been approved and adopted by the governing body, it shall control the general or approximate location, character and extent of each feature shown on the plan...”*

This plan updates the 2011 Comprehensive Plan and provides a framework for making important public and private decisions. The plan provides the legal basis for locating public facilities, utility extensions, transportation improvements, and guiding land development (e.g. housing, industry or commercial). In addition, the plan establishes the foundation for important regulatory land use management tools such as zoning and subdivision regulations.





## A Strategic, Comprehensive Plan for Mathews County 2030

*How do we achieve our vision for the future? What are the goals and priorities for Mathews County over the next 10-15 years? Where and how should growth occur? Where are public services, infrastructure and facility improvements needed? What are important public and private actions that can help us achieve our future goals and community vision?*

### 2030 Comprehensive Plan Overview

Mathews County is located at the eastern edge of the Middle Peninsula of Virginia with shores on the Chesapeake Bay and the North, East and Piankatank Rivers. The County contains over 280 miles of waterfront shoreline, and an abundance of forests, wetlands and special environmental areas. Identified as the "Pearl of the Chesapeake," the County is home to approximately 8,978 residents (2010 census) and a destination for seasonal visitors seeking a rural coastal lifestyle among natural vistas and quaint business areas.

By 2030 Mathews County is envisioned to be a model community that celebrates its outstanding quality of life and showcases its unique natural resources, while sensitively balancing development and promoting eco-friendly practices and businesses. More detailed vision and goals are discussed in the sections that follow.

To achieve the long-range vision, this Plan establishes a number of guiding policies for encouraging the types of development and patterns desired for the future. Also, the Plan recommends a variety of action strategies and potential action projects for achieving the future goals and vision for Mathews County. An appendix to the plan includes an implementation matrix which summarizes the strategies and identifies suggested priorities for undertaking recommendations, as well as both public and private partners who should be involved in carrying the strategies forward.

### Key Planning Themes

- Renewed emphasis on preserving environmental quality to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors, protecting the unique environmental features of the County, and sustaining the local and regional economy;
- Committed leadership to managing future growth and development in a way that balances development, jobs, revenues, and public services while sustaining the rural character and special natural features of Mathews County;
- Increased cooperative approaches and initiatives to enhance the economy through heritage tourism, eco-tourism, aquaculture, and working waterfront business development that complements the environment; and
- Continued public involvement and engagement of multiple partners to address community challenges and pursue potential revitalization or rehabilitation opportunities in each of the County planning areas.



## **Key Planning Recommendations**

### ***People and Housing***

- Increased public education regarding environmental influences and development constraints;
- Increased diversity of housing types and options, including age-restricted housing and workforce housing; upper-floor housing above ground-floor retail uses; cluster development housing; and
- Monitoring and enforcement of zoning and building codes and violations.

### ***Economy***

- Increased efforts, tools, and incentives to support and promote water-based businesses and aquaculture;
- Enhanced tourism initiatives, especially heritage tourism and eco-tourism; and
- Increased business and mixed-use development (residential and commercial) in the Mathews Court House area and designated hamlets, preferably where there is access to public utilities;

### ***History & Culture***

- Increased survey and documentation of County historic properties; and
- Designated local historic district for the Mathews Court House area and other areas of the County, as appropriate.

### ***Public Facilities & Services***

- Develop a policy regarding water supply and management options in the Mathews Court House area as well as in other designated areas;
- Implementation of Phase I of the Sanitary Sewer Transmission Force Main from Mathews Court House to Gloucester County;
- Improved telecommunications network;
- Updated 2035 Transportation Plan (with multi-modal options) and study of additional transportation evacuation routes in Mathews;
- Increased public education regarding shoreline erosion, flooding, septic system capacity limitations, development constraints, etc.





### ***Environment***

- Protection and improvement of water quality through increased public education and revised zoning regulations;
- Preservation of natural resources and increased environmental stewardship through promotion of best management practices, vegetative methodologies for shoreline stabilization (living shorelines), and utilization of available technology and tools (e.g., VIMS Shoreline Inventory);
- Increased training for County Wetlands Board members, contractors, and citizens in "living shoreline" stabilization methods and development of a model certification program that can be used by other communities; and
- Improved recreational access to the County's waterfronts and beaches;
- Identify the potential for recurrent flooding in Mathews County communities and establish planning and regulatory solutions to address flooding and mitigate impacts on people, property and infrastructure in the County.

### ***Land Use and Development***

- Increased conservation and management of large tract agriculture and forests;
- Targeted development in Mathews Court House area, hamlets and crossroad areas;
- Updated zoning and subdivision regulations to guide and manage future growth, particularly with respect to entrance corridors, historic areas, business centers and the waterfront; and
- Planning in anticipation of shoreline erosion, coastal subsidence and sea level rise in order to protect public and private investments and minimize impacts from flooding.



## 2030 Vision for Mathews County

By 2030, Mathews County with its 280 miles<sup>1</sup> of waterfront will be widely acknowledged as the "Pearl of the Chesapeake" and celebrated as a beautiful, vibrant County with a rich cultural, political and economic heritage. The County has become a model community that showcases its outstanding quality of life, unique natural resources, and successful environmentally-friendly, sustainable development practices. In 2030, Mathews County will be a community where:

- The County carefully plans for and achieves a sustainable economy by tailoring land management policies, initiatives, and regulations to County special needs and unique environmental characteristics.
- Informed citizens work closely with government to protect the County and its way of life. Through their efforts, the sky and water are clear and the air sweet.
- Citizens appreciate each other and look to the future with pride. They value their heritage, close-knit-family traditions, open government, community service and independence.
- Researchers are attracted to Mathews to study the fragile coastal eco-systems, sustainable development practices, and alternative solutions for energy use and environmental protection.
- Government and citizens strive to improve and protect water quality by wisely managing land uses and eliminating potential conflicts.
- Shoreline management and public access to the water are community priorities.
- Development is carefully planned to protect County natural and environmental features; minimize pollution; and to sustain County resources and quality of life.



<sup>1</sup> Based on GIS Information from the County as of 2009.





- Safe water, streets, sidewalks, and properly functioning wastewater and stormwater management systems support the Central Mathews District and Historic Court House village. Other County districts have safe and sanitary conditions through expanded utility systems, use of best management practices, and careful monitoring.
- Life-long learning is an integral part of community life. Schools are outstanding, academically and athletically, with nationally competitive crew and sailing teams.
- County farms delight consumers and restaurant owners with local produce, while area merchants and artisans welcome patrons with quality, creative offerings in services, products, and arts and crafts.
- Forestry, fishery and ecotourism opportunities offer residents quality employment and wages while integrating sustainable business practices that protect and renew natural resources. Seasonal visitors who appreciate Mathews' traditional heritage and natural environment are attracted to the County.
- Eco-friendly enterprises – aquaculture, maritime museums, sailing schools, kayak farms, boat tours – concentrate economic activities on the water.
- Home-based businesses thrive on expanded internet services and distribute Mathews' products worldwide.
- Business enterprises offer quality services and living-wage employment, have limited environmental impact, and provide revenue contributions to the community.
- Mathews County promotes workforce housing, recreational options, health/wellness services, and a sustainable environment for its diverse population, all of which have been achieved through open communication, citizen involvement and creative use of multiple-sourced funding.
- Biking and hiking trails weave through forests and meadows, while multi-modal transportation options minimize the need for cars.







## Mathews County Goals for 2030

To achieve the 2030 Vision for Mathews County, the following broad goals will guide the community in managing future services and growth and providing for the public health, safety and welfare:

### Environment

- Preserve and protect the natural environment and resources of Mathews County, which are fundamental to the community's quality of life and prosperity.
- Encourage low-impact development that protects water quality, is environmentally sensitive and ecologically sustainable.
- Provide public access to outstanding County waterways and shorelines.
- Provide planning leadership within the region to protect the natural environment and resources that are the life sustaining elements of Mathews County and surrounding counties bordering the Chesapeake Bay.
- Lead planning efforts to mitigate the effects of coastal erosion, flooding and potential sea level rise.



### People

- Encourage and sustain a diverse population of residents of varying ages, cultures, and incomes.
- Recognize and sustain the important contribution of County youth to the quality of life and the economy of Mathews and the region.
- Encourage the development and maintenance of safe, sanitary, and affordable housing of varying types and styles to meet the needs of County residents.
- Encourage meaningful public participation in government through diverse forms of communication and a commitment to citizen involvement in public decisions.







### Economy

- Encourage the development of eco-friendly enterprises and water-based businesses that complement the environmental features of the County and promote sustainable aquaculture.
- Encourage clustered, village-oriented business centers in designated locations of the County to provide needed services and products for residents and visitors.
- Promote increased availability of and access to state-of-the-art technology, such as broadband, fiber optic, wireless networks and other technologies that support high speed communication.

### Public Services and Facilities

- Support, encourage, and facilitate public water and sewer facilities to meet the community's needs for safe and sanitary conditions and promote orderly growth and development.
- Encourage and provide quality education facilities, programs and life-long learning opportunities for residents.
- Provide a safe community that effectively utilizes both paid and volunteer public safety options.
- Provide safe, connected streets and alternative transportation opportunities, including sidewalks, trails, bicycle routes and public transit.
- Provide convenient, accessible governmental services.



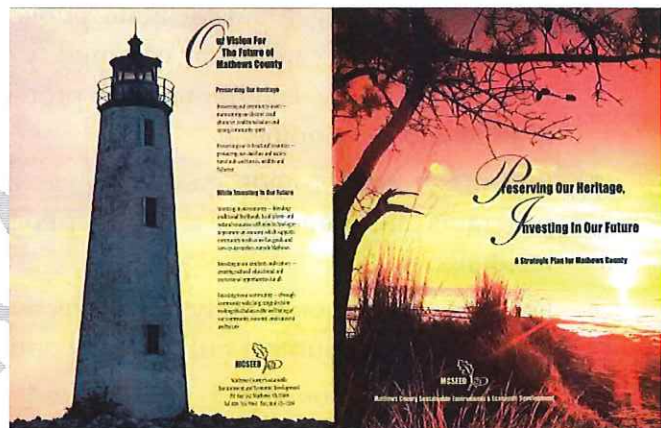


## Comprehensive Planning Process

### Continuing Planning Efforts

Mathews County adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1975; the plan was followed by a zoning ordinance in 1987. Miscellaneous amendments to the Comprehensive Plan were undertaken in the 1980s and the 1990s, including revisions in support of the Virginia Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act of 1988.

Over the past decade, officials and citizens of Mathews County have spent considerable time and effort planning for their sustainable future. In 1997, the Mathews County Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and the Mathews Chamber of Commerce worked extensively with the Nature Conservancy's Center for Compatible Economic Development (CCED) and citizen leaders through volunteer workgroups and community forums to preserve the coastal environment and cultural heritage, while strengthening the local economy. Over a two-year period, the visionary group, Mathews County Sustainable Environment and Economic Development (MCSEED), developed an impressive strategic plan: *Preserving our Heritage, Investing in Our Future: A Strategic Plan for Mathews County* (October 1998). This plan established a vision for the County that focused on preserving community assets and natural resources while investing in an economy that blended local traditions and resources; invested in residents and visitors; and balanced community well-being, the economy and the environment. The plan identified special strengths and critical threats to Mathews County and set forth five initial strategies with specific steps and partners to achieve the vision. MCSEED then challenged stakeholders, citizens and other community leaders to get involved in implementation. Since 1998, there have been accomplishments, including the following:



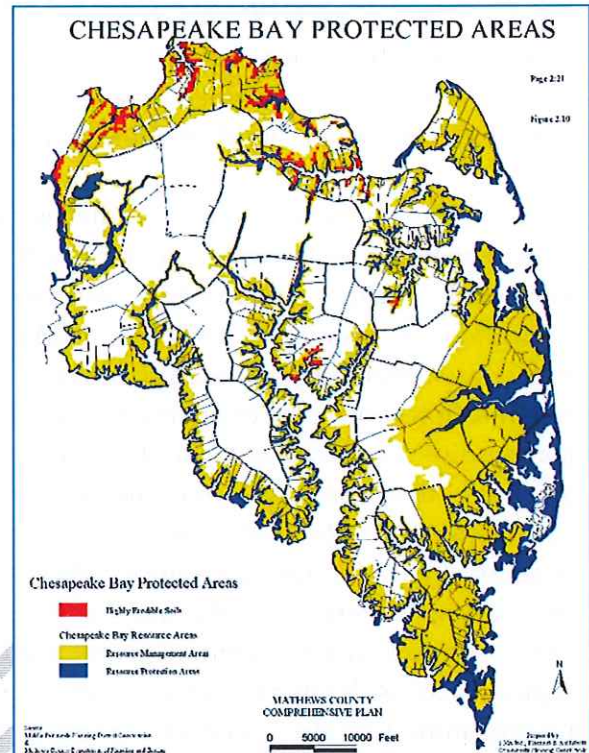
- Heritage and eco-tourism are new economic initiatives visible in the Mathews Blueways Program and investment in the Historic Mathews Court House area and downtown.
- Increased marketing initiatives, a new website, and additional business support services have assisted entrepreneurs and encouraged new business development.



## II. Comprehensive Planning Process

In 2000, the Comprehensive Plan provided a more in-depth look at demographic and economic trends, constraints for development, public facility needs, community issues, land use and in particular, water quality and shorelines. Since the adoption of the 2001 plan update, some of the accomplishments include:

- Adoption of a Statewaters Access Plan for Mathews County in 2003.
- Implementation of a Central Mathews and Courthouse Village Sanitary District Plan. The Hampton Roads Sanitation District has designed and allocated funding for the first phase of a Mathews Transmission Force Main and Pump Stations; construction is expected to begin in 2009 and completed in 2011.
- Establishment of a Septic System Pump-Out Program (2008) in cooperation with the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission.
- New or upgraded public facilities such as the County Courthouse Complex, the Historic Mathews Court House and Green, the Mathews Memorial Library and the Active Lifestyle Center.
- Additional economic initiatives related to tourism and aquaculture, including a visitor welcome center, improvements to downtown Mathews and the Historic Court House Square, and continued broadband investigations.
- Public recreational improvements at Mathews High School and Park, Williams Wharf Landing, Haven/Festival Beach, and Piankatank River Landing; future improvements are planned for Fort Nonsense, the Court House Area, the East River Boatyard property and the Hall property (Billups Creek) owned by the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority.
- Compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act requirements with respect to the Comprehensive Plan (2001), ordinances and protection areas (2006), and program implementation (2008).





### Updating the Comprehensive Plan: New Directions

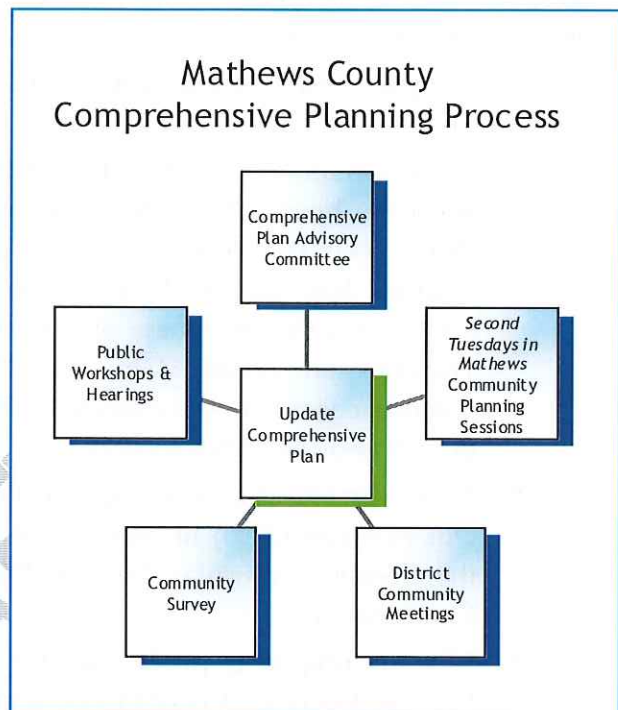
In reviewing the Comprehensive Plan in 2007, as required by the Commonwealth of Virginia, County officials and planners desired a more strategic and user-friendly plan with greater citizen involvement to guide the future of Mathews.

In an effort to reach out to citizens in an educational and innovative manner, the County partnered with Chesapeake Network for Education of Municipal Officials (NEMO)<sup>2</sup> to host five community planning sessions. This organization consists of diversified professionals, community organizations, and governmental agencies that provide communities in the Chesapeake watershed with educational programs and planning assistance. The goals of the sessions were to: stimulate and engage citizens in community planning, introduce broad topics for consideration, and promote a greater understanding of the value of planning. These evening workshop sessions, billed as “*Second Tuesdays in Mathews*,” were held from October 2007 to February 2008 and featured the following topics:

- Linking land, water and growth;
- Growth in and around Mathews;
- Mathews economy: fostering sustainable economic development;
- Mathews valuable resources (shorelines, forests, agriculture, natural heritage, and history); and
- Planning the direction of your community.

The *Second Tuesdays in Mathews* sessions were very successful in engaging citizens in the future of Mathews County; each session included from 60 to 80 people in lively and thoughtful discussions. Summaries of the sessions are included as an appendix to this plan.

Some of the community themes and issues that emerged were:



<sup>2</sup> NEMO Partners for this project included Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Cooperative Extension, National Park Service, Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, Virginia Department of Forestry, Mathews Historical Society, and Maritime Heritage Foundation. Project Sponsors included Mathews County, MCSEED, and Mathews Memorial Library.





## II. Comprehensive Planning Process

- Citizens identified the following elements as important to the future of Mathews County: the landscape, the environment, heritage and culture, recreation, economy, diverse people, youth, quality public services and facilities, and effective governance.
- Citizens identified special issues that need careful consideration: possible sea level rise, flooding, environmental protection, water/sewer challenges, community growth patterns and build-out potential, neighborhood-based planning, and revenue production and long-range financial planning.
- Citizens encouraged planners to review and incorporate applicable past planning efforts, including the MCSEED Plan and Downtown Mathews Plan. Look at successful planning efforts for similar rural communities - both regionally and beyond.
- Citizens recommended diverse, broad representation for input into the Comprehensive Plan, as well as multiple venues for participation and distribution of information.

**Preparing for Comprehensive Planning**  
Mathews County Virginia



**Outcome**  
All the "Decorative Tuesdays" sessions were well attended - 8 to 10 participants each evening, including citizens, planning commission members and members of the County Board of Supervisors. Discussions were lively with participants voicing their concerns and desires for the future of the county.

Here's an example: During the first Tuesday session, participants saw a NEMO presentation on state and local communities can use to plan for the future and incorporate key resources into decision-making. Then, the NEMO team initiated an interactive workshop to help participants describe elements of their vision for Mathews' future. On a long wall the team had pre-selected elements participants had already identified in the

**Goals**  
Mathews officials contacted NEMO for assistance in preparing for revising the County's comprehensive plan. Specifically, the county wanted to:

- Stimulate interest and engagement in the forthcoming planning process
- Introduce community stakeholders to broad topics expected to influence Mathews County in the next 5 to 20 years
- Prepare community stakeholders and county officials with a solid understanding of the value and function of planning

**Process**  
Working with County officials, NEMO partners helped design, develop and deliver a five-part civic education series and plan a citizens planning academy workshop. The series, called "Taking About the Future - Second Tuesdays in Mathews" explored a specific topic each month from October 2007 to February 2008 in an evening workshop:

- Linking Land, Water and Growth
- Growth in & Around Mathews
- Mathews Economy: Fostering Sustainable Economic Development
- Mathews' Valuable Resources (Shorelines, Forests, Agriculture, Natural Heritage, History)
- Planning the Direction of Your Community

Each evening began with an introduction by the County Administrator, followed by a presentation, then about an hour of facilitated discussion.

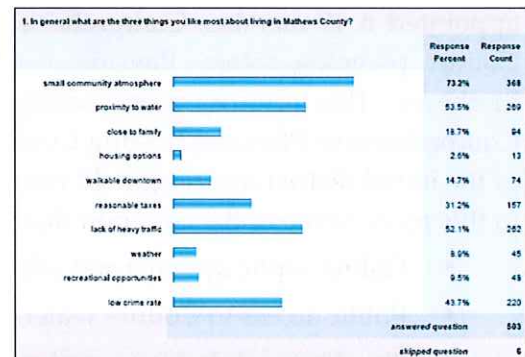
**Local Project Sponsors:** Mathews County, Mathews County Outdoor Recreation & Economic Development, Mathews Memorial Library

**Participating NEMO Partners:** VA Department of Conservation & Recreation, VA Cooperative Extension, National Park Service, Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, VA Department of Forestry, Mathews Historical Society, and Maritime Heritage Foundation

For more information: [www.chesapeake-nemo.net](http://www.chesapeake-nemo.net)

Following the *Tuesdays in Mathews* sessions, the County developed an internet-based Citizen Survey to solicit additional community input using SurveyMonkey.com. The survey and a tabulation of results are included in the appendix to this plan. As of February 2009, approximately 500 respondents had completed the survey. In summary, the following comments were noted:

- *What people like the most about Mathews County:* the small community atmosphere (73%); the proximity of the community to water (53%); lack of heavy traffic (52%); low crime rate (44%); and slow growth (44%).
- *How people would like to see growth in the next ten years:* slow, one percent or less (44%), no growth (26%), medium growth, one to three percent (23%).
- *What types of development is preferred in Mathews County:* affordable housing options for all income levels (39%); new single-family dwellings on lot of 1-2.5 acres (37%), on smaller lots, with required open space (31%), and on lots of 5 acres or more (27%)
- *The availability of rental housing in Mathews County is fair (53%).*







## II. Comprehensive Planning Process

- *Additional commercial businesses are needed in Mathews County (64%).* The most needed businesses are: retail (62%), restaurants (61%), and hotels, motels or bed and breakfast establishments (49%). Approximately 50% of the persons purchase their goods and services in Mathews. Areas identified for commercial businesses most often were: downtown Mathews, Cobbs Creek, Gwynn's Island, New Point and surrounding counties.
- *Issues most important to County residents were:* protecting water quality and resources (74%); preserving the rural character (63%); availability of wireless/broadband (60%), preserving forest land (53%), access to the water (48%), and ability to pay local taxes (46%).
- *Residents used the following public services frequently:* library (75%), waste transfer station (66%), general government (65%), recreation (60%), and schools (54%).
- *Familiarity with the County Comprehensive Plan:* Approximately 50% of the respondents were somewhat familiar with the Comprehensive Plan.

To engage youth in the planning process, County Planners visited Mathews County High School and met with seniors to share information on the Comprehensive Plan and to obtain their thoughts on the future. In general, the high school seniors requested that education remain a top priority for the County and all citizens; that youth be supported in public decisions and actions; and that youth be included in reviewing the long-range vision and plan for the County.

In addition to the survey, the County Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission appointed a 17-member Comprehensive Plan Advisory Group representing each of the five County planning areas: Bayside, Central Mathews, Gwynn's Island, Piankatank, and West Mathews. This advisory group assisted County planners and administrators in furthering the Comprehensive Plan and hosting Community Meetings in each of the five districts. Summaries of the initial district meetings held from August to November 2008 are included in the appendix to this plan. Some of the common themes were:

- Failing septic systems and effect on water quality of creeks;
- Public access to County waters and shorelines;
- Flooding and drainage; maintenance of ditches;
- Enhance small business and employment opportunities for waterfront and water-based industries; tourism, ecotourism, and heritage tourism; retail and support services;
- Communication needs - High-speed, broadband internet access; cell tower coverage;
- Code enforcement – wetlands, junk, neglected/abandoned buildings, etc.
- Environmental conservation - wetlands, forests, water, soils, etc.; rising sea levels;
- Availability of public water and sewer; sub-standard housing;
- Need for affordable, workforce housing (e.g., apartments), and age-restricted independent and assisted-living housing;



### *II. Comprehensive Planning Process*

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- Recreation improvements – bike trails, Blueways, swimming pool, more public beaches, entertainment venues;
- Maintain rural, small town character; encourage managed, limited growth that is low-impact;
- Sufficient tax base to balance services, tax rate, public needs.

In drafting the Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Group and the Mathews County Planning Commission worked to ensure that the plan met State planning requirements, the needs of Mathews County, and reflected the specific needs of the community districts. Special efforts were made to develop a user-friendly plan that appropriately guided future development and investment in the County.

The goal of the 2016 Mathews Comprehensive Plan review is to not only meet state mandates but to also reexamine and realign the County's goals and strategies based on new events and more current data on the state of the County. The 2016 update of the Mathews County Comprehensive Plan, conducted by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission in conjunction with the Mathews County Planning Commission continues to follow previous efforts of research and update of statistical information for the County, update and or inclusion of required elements as well as a current analysis of the County's conditions and future objectives and strategies for creating a harmonious community. Each section of the Comprehensive Plan was reviewed by Mathews County Planning staff and discussed at the Mathews Planning Commission meetings.



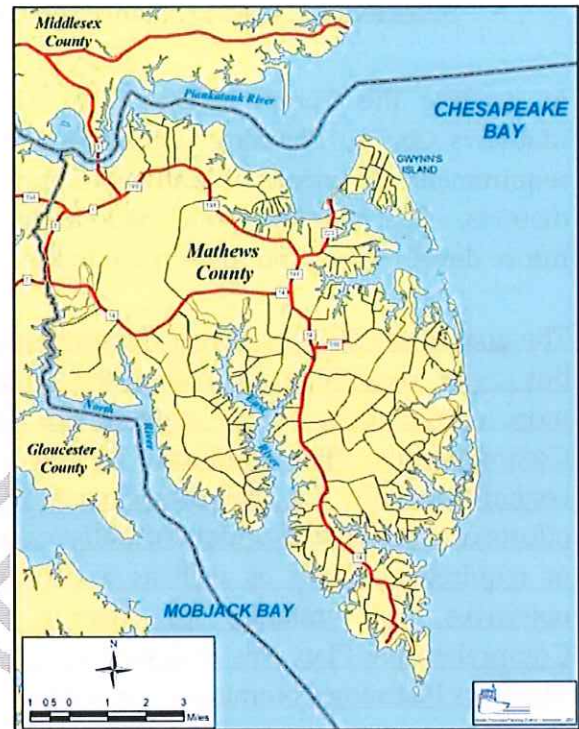


## Mathews County and the Region

### Overview of Mathews County

Located on the eastern tip of the Middle Peninsula of Virginia, Mathews County consists of 86 square miles and is one of the smallest counties in Virginia. Known as the “Pearl of the Chesapeake”, the County has 280 miles of shoreline on the Chesapeake Bay and other smaller bays, as well as shores on the Piankatank, East and North Rivers.

First explored by Captain John Smith in 1608, Mathews was formed from Gloucester County in 1791. The County was named in honor of Major Thomas Mathews, a veteran of the American Revolutionary War and member of the Virginia House of Delegates. Since that time, Mathews County has been a center for navigation and shipbuilding on the Chesapeake Bay. In 1804, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned a lighthouse at the southern-most tip of the County, New Point Comfort Lighthouse, which still stands today as a community and national landmark.



Source: Middle Peninsula Planning District

### Regional Influences

Virginia's Middle Peninsula includes the Counties of Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Middlesex, and Mathews, as well as three incorporated towns: West Point, Tappahannock and Urbanna. Also, Mathews is included in the Hampton Roads Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). A map of the region is shown on the following page.

Located between the Rappahannock and York Rivers which flow to the Chesapeake Bay, the region is a boater's paradise and is promoted as “Virginia's River Country.” Because of the region's convenient access to multiple waterways, a multitude of historic landmarks, and varied agricultural and natural landscapes, there are numerous opportunities for recreation, eco- and heritage-tourism, and environmentally-friendly enterprises.





#### IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

The Middle Peninsula Region is in close proximity to two major interstate highways, Interstate 64 and Interstate 95. These two interstates provide connectivity throughout the Commonwealth and beyond, providing good proximity for transporting people, goods and services. I-64 connects the region to Richmond, Williamsburg, Hampton, Newport News, Portsmouth, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach, all major development centers for Virginia's eastern population. Interstate 95 connects the region to Washington D.C., which is approximately 175 miles to the north.

According to community profile information assembled by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership in 2015, the region's economy is primarily based in services, government, and trade sectors, with the greatest employment in education and health care. Lumber, paper and wood products, and seafood are the major products of the region.

#### Community Profile *Virginia's River Country*

## Labor Market

Employment by Sector* (2nd Qtr. 2015)		
Agriculture Forestry Fishing and Hunting	756	2.9%
Mining Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction	67	0.3%
Utilities	95	0.4%
Construction	1,462	5.5%
Manufacturing	3,004	11.3%
Wholesale Trade	724	2.7%
Retail Trade	3,853	14.5%
Transportation and Warehousing	366	1.4%
Information	241	0.9%
Finance and Insurance	766	2.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	228	0.9%
Professional Scientific and Technical Services	819	3.1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	358	1.4%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management	766	2.9%
Educational Services	242	0.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	3,050	11.5%
Arts Entertainment and Recreation	430	1.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	2,171	8.2%
Other Services	1,048	4.0%
Total Government	6,058	22.9%
Federal Government	214	0.8%
State Government	1,081	4.1%
Local Government	4,763	18.0%
Unclassified	N.D.	N.D.
Total	26,504	100.0%

N.D. - Not Disclosed

\*By Business Establishment

Source: Virginia Economic Development Partnership. [www.yesvirginia.com](http://www.yesvirginia.com)



*IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

**Demographics and Economic Trends**

**Middle Peninsula Region and Mathews County**

The table on the following page provides a summary of basic statistics for Mathews County and surrounding counties in the Middle Peninsula Region. The following sections discuss some of the demographic and economic trends of the region and Mathews County.

**Population**

- Mathews County has the second lowest population in the region, representing approximately ten percent of the total population. Neighboring Gloucester County has the highest population in the region.
- Between 2000 and 2010, the region averaged an 8.5 percent increase in population; however, Mathews County lost population over this time period declining from 9,207 to 8,978.
- Population projections by the Virginia Employment Commission indicate that the region may increase in population approximately forty percent by 2030. King William County is expected to almost double its population, while Mathews County is projected to slightly decrease.<sup>3</sup> VEC projects that other counties will continue to grow at moderate to high rates. The projected increase in population for the region is attributed to the growth of the nearby Richmond and Hampton Roads Areas.
- The region totals 1,353 square miles and has an average population density of 80.2 persons per square mile. Mathews County is smaller than the rest of the counties within the region (85.7 square miles) and has a population density of 104.5 persons per square mile; this is higher than the regional average.
- The median age of residents in Mathews County, according to the 2010 Census, was 50.1 years which was higher than most surrounding counties; Middlesex County exhibited a similar median age of 53. In 2010, approximately 20% of the population of Mathews County was under 18 years of age, holding steady from the 2000 census.

**Education**

- According to Virginia Employment Commission, Mathews County has the highest percentage of people in the region (26%) who have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.





*IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
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Regional Summary of Demographic and Economic Statistics (2000-2010)							
	Mathews	Middle Peninsula	Gloucester	Middlesex	King Wm	King & Queen	Essex
<b>Population:</b>							
Population 2010	8,978	90,826	36,858	10,959	15,935	6,945	11,151
Population 2000	9,207	83,684	34,780	9,932	13,146	6,630	9,989
Population % Chg 2000-10	-2.49	9	6	10	21	5	12
Population 2020*	9284	105,411	46,013	12,055	19,119	7,187	11,960
Population 2030*	9,680	116,838	51,824	13,181	22,227	7,564	12,974
Population Density: Persons/Sq Mile 2010	104.5	80.2	169.2	84.1	58.2	22	43.4
Population Density: Persons/Sq Mile 2000	105.5	67.2	131.2	81.6	57	21.8	42.1
Population, Median Age, 2013	50.1	41.5	42.0	53	40	47	45
Population, Age <18, %, 2010	20.2		24.6	18.3	23.6	22.4	25.6
<b>Education: 2010-2014 Estimates for 18 and over</b>							
% Less than High School	11	12	10	10	10	15	21
% High School Graduates	35	36	34	30	40	43	38
% Associate Degree, Some College	28	32	35	33	32	26	29
% Bachelor Degree or Higher	26	24	21	26	18	16	13
<b>Income:</b>							
Median Household Income 2007	\$54,431	\$ 50,836	\$ 56,123	\$ 45,583	\$ 62,052	\$ 43,191	\$ 43,637
Median Household Income 2009-2013	\$55,192	\$54,097	\$60,519	\$53,309	\$62,670	\$48,372	\$ 44,885
Income % Change 2007-13	1%	6%	7%	14%	<1%	11%	3%
% Families Below Poverty (2010)	9.1	9.8	9.2	9.4	9.5	9.2	11.1
<b>Labor Force &amp; Employment:</b>							
Civilian Labor Force 2014	4,177	46,889	19,392	5,066	8,828	3,653	5,773
Civilian Labor Force 2007	4,537	47,783	20,700	5,103	8,460	3,406	5,577
Employed Labor Force 2014	4,022	45,013	18,655	4,809	8,371	3,442	5,406
Unemployment Rates 12/2015	3.7	4.0	3.8	3.9	3.9	4.4	5.0
<b>Other:</b>							
Taxable Sales 2007, Millions\$	\$ 40.0	\$ 772.5	\$372.0	\$ 83.8	\$ 70.9	\$ 14.7	\$ 191.0
Taxable Sales 2011, Millions\$	\$37	\$706.5	\$337.7	\$78	\$81.5	\$11.4	\$160.9
Taxable Sales 2014,	\$35	\$762.3	\$356	\$86.2	\$94	\$11.6	\$175.6



## Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030

### IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

Millions\$							
Tourism Expenditures 2011, Millions \$	\$ 29.19	\$195.54	\$40.89	\$83.91	\$ 8.6	\$ 3.45	\$ 29.5
Tourism Expenditures 2014, Millions \$	\$31.9	\$211	\$45.1	\$90.3	\$9.2	\$3.7	\$30.8
Tourism, Local Tax Receipts 2011 (Millions \$)	\$.84	\$5.58	\$1.17	\$2.42	\$.20	\$.10	\$.85
Tourism, Local Tax Receipts 2014 (Millions \$)	\$.90	\$5.99	\$1.3	\$2.6	\$.22	\$.10	\$.87
Tourism Employment 2007	412	2,487	441	1,141	84	43	366
2011	400	2,415	437	1,090	88	42	358
2014	419	2,497	462	1,124	91	43	358
Sources: 2010 US Census Bureau, Virginia Employment Commission, Virginia Dept. of Taxation, Virginia Tourism Commission							

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*IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

**Income**

- The median household income for Mathews in 2014 was \$55,192. This is an increase from 2007 and higher than most other counties in the region; however, it is below the state average of \$64,792.
- In 2007, approximately 6.7 percent of the families in the Middle Peninsula Region were below the poverty level. According to the U.S Census, Mathews County's percentage of families living in poverty, while still the lowest in the region, more than doubled from 4.3 in 2007 to 9.1 in 2014. City data (www.city-data.com) shows the poverty rate for Mathews County at 10.5% in 2013. This spike could be explained by the economic recession from 2007 to 2010.

**Labor Force and Employment**

- In 2010, the labor force of Mathews County represented approximately 10 percent of the regional labor force and also exhibited a low unemployment rate. Gloucester County had the largest labor force within the region and the lowest unemployment rate.
- Unemployment figures from the Virginia Employment Commission showed a 3.7 percent unemployment rate in Mathews County (lowest in the region) as of November 2015, compared to 4.0% for the State and 4.8% for the nation.
- Employment in the region by industry (2010) is summarized in a table on the following page. In the Middle Peninsula Region, public administration is the largest employment sector. Educational, health and social services and retail trade were the second and third largest employment sectors for the region, followed by manufacturing. The smallest employment sectors for the region were the information and arts, entertainment and recreation.
- Mathews County industry employment trends are fairly consistent with regional trends. According to the Virginia Employment Commission, in 2015 government, retail and, health and social services sector employed the highest percentage of laborers. Like the region, the information, wholesale and arts, entertainment and recreation employment sectors employ the smallest percentage of laborers in Mathews.
- According to 2015 statistics by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the region exhibited the largest employment growth in the government sector (23%) followed by retail (14.5%) and then health care and social assistance (11.5%).
- Employment projections for 2016 for the Bay Consortium Workforce Investment Board Area by the VEC show that the industries with the most potential for growth in the region are professional and technical services (45%), health care and social assistance (32%), finance and insurance (26%), and educational services (20%),



**IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies**

**2015 Employment Percentages by Industry**

Industry	Essex County	Gloucester County	King & Queen County	King William County	Mathews County	Middlesex County	Middle Peninsula	Virginia
Ag, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, Mining	<u>1.6%</u>	<u>.7%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>4.1%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>1.4%</u>	<u>3.6%</u>	<u>&lt;1%</u>
Construction	<u>2.1%</u>	<u>5.6%</u>	<u>9.1%</u>	<u>7.2%</u>	<u>5.4%</u>	<u>6.7%</u>	<u>6%</u>	<u>5%</u>
Manufacturing	<u>11.2%</u>	<u>1.7%</u>	<u>12.3%</u>	<u>19.5%</u>	<u>6.4%</u>	<u>6.5%</u>	<u>9.6%</u>	<u>6.2%</u>
Wholesale Trade	<u>4.3%</u>	<u>2.3%</u>	<u>5.1%</u>	<u>2.3%</u>	<u>.9%</u>	<u>3.1%</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>2.9%</u>
Retail Trade	<u>21.6%</u>	<u>19.7%</u>	<u>3.7%</u>	<u>17.6%</u>	<u>13.8%</u>	<u>11.9%</u>	<u>14.7%</u>	<u>11%</u>
Transportation and Warehousing, Utilities	<u>.6%</u>	<u>1.5%</u>	<u>6.4%</u>	<u>.7%</u>	<u>1.9%</u>	<u>1.1%</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>2.8%</u>
Information	<u>1%</u>	<u>.8%</u>	<u>N.D.</u>	<u>N.D.</u>	<u>N. D</u>	<u>1.5%</u>	<u>1.1%</u>	<u>1.9%</u>
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	<u>4.6%</u>	<u>3.4%</u>	<u>N.D.</u>	<u>3.5%</u>	<u>2.3%</u>	<u>2.6%</u>	<u>3.3%</u>	<u>5%</u>
Professional, Scientific, Administration	<u>2.4%</u>	<u>3.1%</u>	<u>2.2%</u>	<u>3.9%</u>	<u>3%</u>	<u>3.2%</u>	<u>5.4%</u>	<u>10.6%</u>
Educational, Health and Social Services	<u>15.5%</u>	<u>17.2%</u>	<u>8.4%</u>	<u>6.5%</u>	<u>16.8%</u>	<u>8.7%</u>	<u>12.2%</u>	<u>12.7%</u>
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, etc.	<u>1.1%</u>	<u>1.4%</u>	<u>N.D.</u>	<u>1%</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>3.3%</u>	<u>1.5%</u>	<u>1.5%</u>
Accommodation and Food Service	<u>11.3%</u>	<u>11.4%</u>	<u>N.D.</u>	<u>7.1%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>6.2%</u>	<u>8.8%</u>	<u>9%</u>
Other Services (except Public Admin.)	<u>3.9%</u>	<u>4.3%</u>	<u>2.3%</u>	<u>3.1%</u>	<u>6.4%</u>	<u>2.7%</u>	<u>3.8%</u>	<u>3.6%</u>
Public Administration	<u>14%</u>	<u>22.8%</u>	<u>30%</u>	<u>21.1%</u>	<u>25.9%</u>	<u>31.6%</u>	<u>24.2%</u>	<u>18.8%</u>

N. D. Not disclosed.

Source: Virginia Economic Development Partnership. Yesvirginia.org. 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2015,  
Virginia Employment Commission, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2015



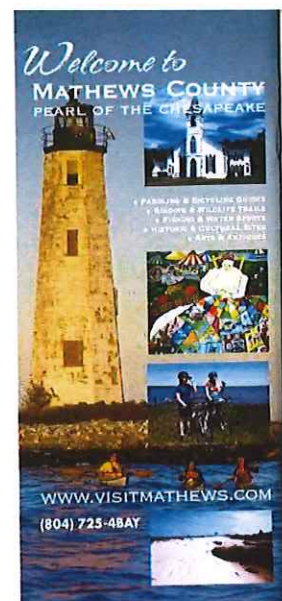


#### IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

- Like the region, the employment trends of Mathews County have made varying changes over the past decade. Virginia employment and economic statistics continue to depict government as the largest employer, followed by retail trade, and then accommodation and food services (see Employment by Industry for Mathews County on the following page).
- Employment projections for 2016 for the Bay Consortium Workforce Investment Board Area by the VEC show that the industries with the most potential for growth in the region are professional and technical services (45%), health care and social assistance (32%), finance and insurance (26%), and educational services (20%).

##### Taxable Sales and Tourism

- In 2015, Mathews County had the second lowest amount of taxable sales within the region coming in second to last only to King & Queen.
- In 2007, Virginia's visitor expenditures totaled approximately \$18.5 billion, of which the Middle Peninsula Region accounted for less than one percent. Tourism expenditures and local tax receipts have increased since 2011 but are lower than in 2007. in Mathews County, which amounted to approximately 15% of the region's expenditures. This resulted in approximately \$842,500 in tax revenue for Mathews County.



##### Conclusions

- Despite slight decreases, the population of Mathews County is relatively stable and not expected to grow as rapidly as surrounding counties in the near future. The median age of residents (50.1 years) is higher than most of the surrounding counties, which depicts an aging population in the County.
- The average income of residents in Mathews County is higher than most residents in the region. This may be attributable to several factors, including the level of education and the higher median age of residents.
- Employment in Mathews County generally follows the regional trends; government and retail trade are the largest employers (2015).
- Increased tourism efforts could be economically beneficial to Mathews County and the region in the future. Benefits could include increased employment opportunities for County residents and a stronger revenue stream generated by tourist activities.



*IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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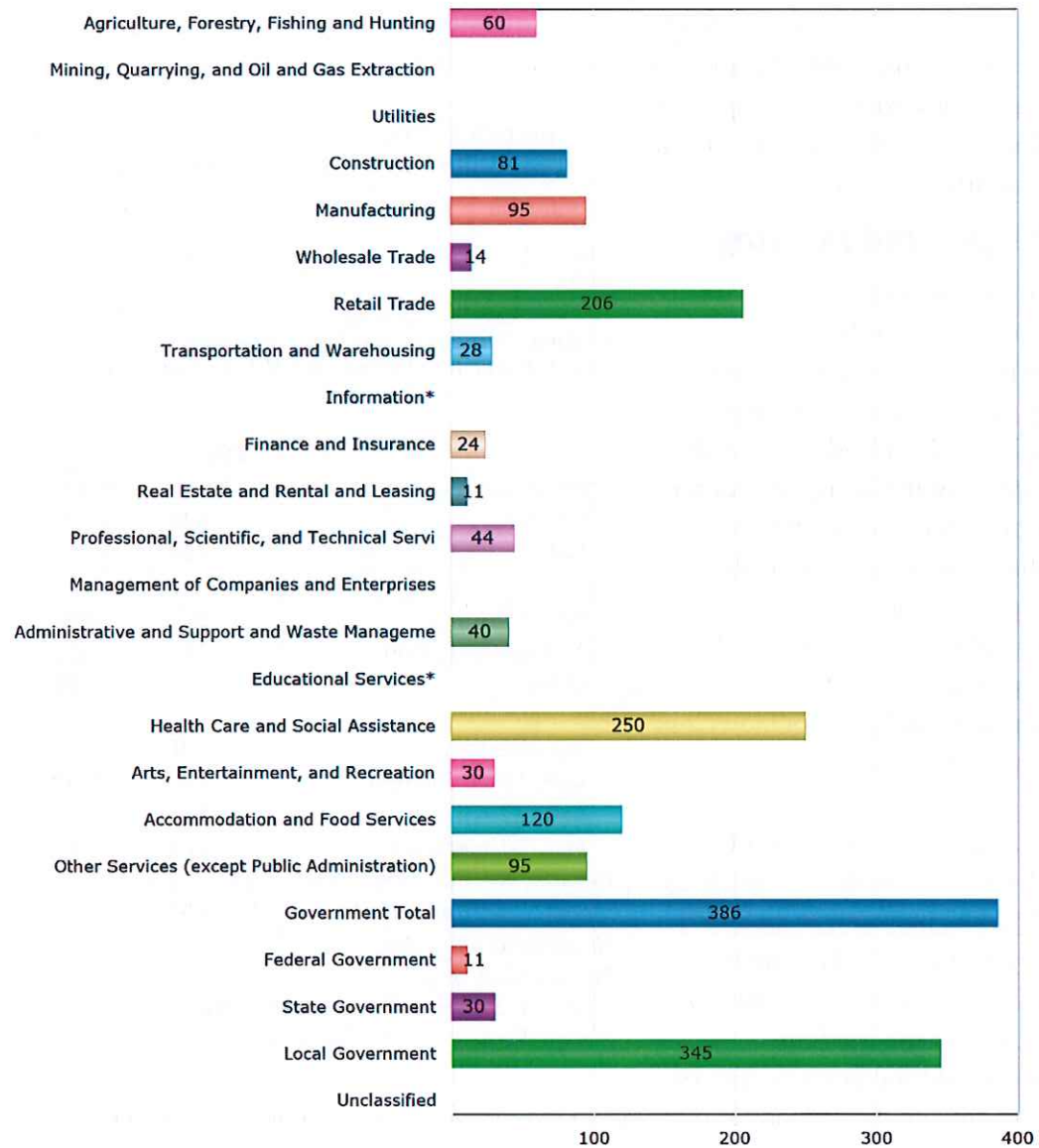


IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

Mathews County

Economic Profil

Employment by Industry



Total: 1,490

Note: Asterisk (\*) indicates non-disclosable data.



#### IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

### Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

Mathews County is divided into five community planning areas: Piankatank, Gwynn's Island, Central Mathews, West Mathews, and Bayside. A map of the districts is found on the following page. This section of the Comprehensive Plan describes general planning elements for the County as a whole -- People and Housing, Economy, Historic and Cultural Resources, Environment, Public Facilities and Services, and Land Use. The next Section, Community Area Plans, provides more specific planning information on a community-level basis.

#### People and Housing

##### Demographics

Mathews County has experienced relatively little growth in population over the past two hundred years with data showing an up and down trend over the past 100 years. The County has grown slowly in population since its formation. For example, the population in 1900 was approximately 800 persons less than what it is today.

In 2010, the population of Mathews County was 8,978. In 2014, the population declined further to 8,737. The median age of the population was 50 years and the median household income was \$55,192.

Approximately 20% of the population was 19 years old or younger, a decrease from 22% in 2000.

In 2010, the average household size was 2.32 persons. Approximately 69% of the households consisted of families and approximately 21% had children under 18. These statistics are almost identical to those of 2000. Of the reported non-family households, 41% contained persons 65 years old and over, up from 36% in 2000. Of interest is that the median household income

Historical Population & Housing in Mathews County						
	1800	1850	1900	1950	2000	2010
Population	5,806	6,714	8,239	7,148	9,207	<u>8,978</u>
Housing Units		711	1,642	2,510	5,333	<u>5,669</u>
Sources: <u>2010 U.S. Census</u> . Historical Census Browser. University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <a href="http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu">http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu</a> ; U.S. Census Bureau.						

	2000	<u>2010</u>	<u>2014</u>
Population	9,207	<u>8,978</u>	<u>* 8,737</u>
Female	52%	<u>51.4%</u>	
Male	48%	<u>48.6%</u>	
Race			
White	87%	<u>88%</u>	<u>87.7%</u>
African-American	11%	<u>9.2%</u>	<u>9.2%</u>
Other	2%	<u>2.8%</u>	<u>3.1%</u>
Age			
Age, Median	46	<u>50</u>	
Age, 19 or younger	22%	<u>20.1%</u>	
Age, 20-64	56%	<u>54.3 %</u>	
Age, 65 and over	22%	<u>25.6 %</u>	
Income, Median Household	\$43,222	<u>\$55,192</u>	
Income, Median Family	\$50,653		
Household Size, Avg	2.32	<u>2.32</u>	
Family Size, Avg	2.75	<u>2.7</u>	
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010. Weldon Cooper Center, 2010, <u>2014</u>			





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increased dramatically from \$27,428 in 1990 to \$43,222 in 2000 and continued to increase to \$55,192 in 2010.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AREAS

DRAFT



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Mathews County Educational Attainment	
	2010
<i>Education, 18 yrs &amp; over</i>	
Less than High School	19%
High School Diploma	34%
Some College	22%
Associate's Degree	5%
Bachelor's Degree	11%
Professional Degree	2%
Masters or Doctorate	6%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Fact finder	

Mathews County Household Characteristics, 2010	
<i>Family households:</i>	<u>68.8</u>
With own children under 18 years	<u>20.7</u>
Married-couple family	<u>56.9</u>
With own children under 18 years	<u>15.6</u>
Female householder, no husband present	<u>8.7</u>
With own children under 18 years	<u>3.9</u>
<i>Non-family households:</i>	<u>31.2</u>
Householder living alone	<u>26.5</u>
Householder 65 years and over	<u>14.5</u>
Households with persons under 18 years	<u>24.2</u>
Households with persons 65 years & over	<u>41.4</u>
Average household size	<u>2.3</u>
Average family size	<u>2.76</u>
Families below poverty level	<u>*9.1</u>
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Fact finder *U.S. Census community survey estimate for 2014	

Mathews County - Median Income 2000-2010			
	2000	2010	% Change 2000-2010
Mathews County -households	\$43,222	\$55,192	22%
Mathews County- family	\$50,653	\$68,333	35%
Virginia-household	\$46,677	\$64,792	28%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Fact finder

Provisional population estimates for Mathews County released both by Weldon Cooper and the Virginia Employment Commission show an increase in population to 9,284 by 2020. This 3.41% increase can be explained as a result of people moving into the County. Of special note is that Mathews County hosts a number of tourists and seasonal residents that are unaccounted for in population estimates. Because of the attraction of the coastal environment and other community assets, Mathews County is a destination for many persons who continue a long tradition of spending summers here. The Mathews Visitor and Information Center reports it serves nearly 1,200 visitors and seasonal residents a month. The following chart provides an estimate of the number of visitors frequenting Mathews County and being tracked by Mathews County Visitors and Information Center annually.





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**Mathews County Annual Visitor Information**

Year	# of Visitors
2008	+/- 10,000
2009	11,000
2010	11,000
2011	12,000
2012	16,065

*Source: Mathews County's Visitors and Information Center*

**Demographic Trends for Mathews County**

In summary, given these population statistics and their effect on the future of Mathews County, the following trends should be considered for the purposes of long-range planning:

- The population of Mathews is aging. As a result, the number of persons 19 and younger is continuing to decline and the number of persons over 65 is increasing. This trend will influence housing and community facilities needs.
- The projected increase in migration into the County (based on 2014 Weldon Cooper estimates) although minimal, should be considered, especially with respect to managing land development and supporting public infrastructure and services (transportation, utilities, etc.).
- With the decrease in young families and persons under 19, there is an increased potential to lose young adults to more metropolitan areas, particularly because of greater job opportunities.
- The median household income continues to increase. This may be related to the incomes of those persons migrating into the County.
- The educational attainment of persons in Mathews County is favorable. Over 80% of the population over 25 is a high school graduate, attended college or earned a college degree.
- The number of seasonal summer residents in Mathews is not well documented. These residents can result in a significant fluctuation in the County population during peak summer months. Because these seasonal tourists and residents affect public services, special consideration is needed when planning for future community improvements related to public safety and health (e.g., water supply, waste treatment).



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**Housing**

A summary of the housing characteristics in Mathews County is presented in the table below. According to the 2010 Census, most of the residential structures in the County were single-family homes (85%). Apartments or duplex structures represented less than 3% of the housing stock, while mobile homes represented approximately 12.5% of the housing stock. The median value of a single-family, owner-occupied home in 2010 was \$207,900; this equated to a median home mortgage of \$1,164 per month. In 2010, approximately 83% of homeowners paid one-third or less of their income toward housing costs.

Mathews County Housing Stock, 2000- 2010				
	2000		2010	
	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Housing Units, Total</i>	5,333	100	5,669	100
Owner-occupied housing units	3,331	63	3,858	68.1
Renter-occupied housing units	601	11	618	16
Vacant housing Units)	1,401 (seasonal use-891)	26	1,811 (seasonal use -1,198)	31.9
<i>Housing Units, Type</i>				
Single-Family	4,644	87	4,804	85
Duplex	18	<.5	13	<0.1
Multi-Family	127	2	123	2
Mobile Homes	532	10	711	12.5
Boat/ RV	12	<.5	0	0
<i>Housing Units, Age</i>				
Housing built after 1990		19		24
Housing built 1960-1989		39		40
Housing built 1959 & earlier		42		36
<i>Median Home Value</i>	\$111,400		\$207,900	
<i>Median Home Monthly Mortgage</i>	\$918		\$1,164	100

Source: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder



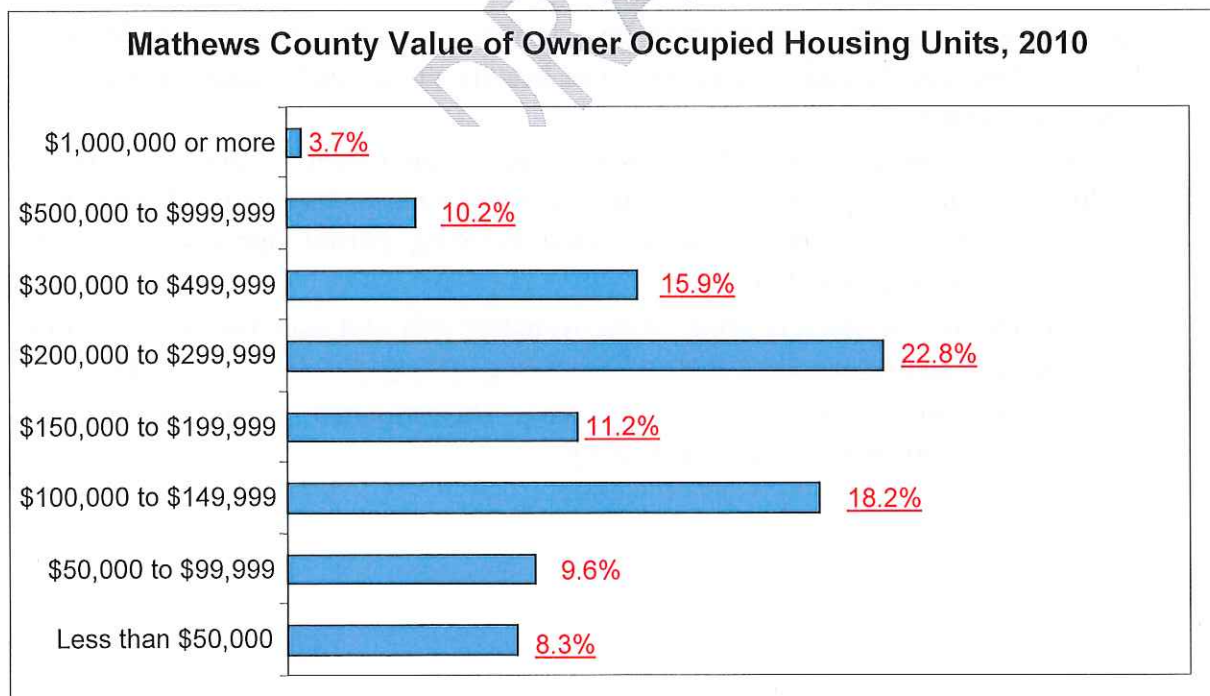


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Building permit data for Mathews County from 1990 through 2014 indicate a sharp decline in residential development. Information received from the Mathews County Building department also confirms that less than 100 building permits were issued for new development from 2012-2015.

Mathews County Annual Residential Building Permits		
Single-Family Building Permits	No.	Value
1990	194	\$ 17,069,150
2000	45	\$ 6,807,880
2005	91	\$ 17,857,444
2010	30	\$ 7,779,710
2014	25	\$ 5,787,792
Note: There were no other residential building types built during these years according to data source.		
Source: U.S Census		

The value of housing units in Mathews County in 2010 is shown in the following table. In general, according to the 2010 U.S Census, housing values have increased since 2000. More than 50% of the housing unit values lie in the \$100,000 to \$300,000 range while median housing value in 2010 was \$207,900 and expected to rise to \$263,700 by 2014.



Source: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, 5 year estimates Survey



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While census data shows an increase in housing value, data collected through the Virginia Department of Taxation shows a decrease in estimated true tax value of Mathews County property.

Estimated True Value of Locally Taxed Property

Year	Value
2008	\$2,088,615,479
2009	\$1,936,040,362
2010	\$1,898,045,946
2011	\$1,718,289,993
2012	\$1,682,251,203
2013	\$1,670,844,900

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation, 2008-2013 sales ratio study.

Population and residential development activity have decreased in Mathews County since 2007, while, according to 2009-2014 US Census estimates, housing values have increased.

**Housing Trends for Mathews County**

Based on review of the information available, some of the housing trends that should be considered in future planning for Mathews County include:

- Housing and real estate continue to be a primary revenue generator for Mathews County. The County's economy still relies heavily on property taxes as a primary source of revenue.
- There is a deficiency of alternative housing types in the County. There are very few multi-family units. Specialized housing (e.g. for seniors or handicapped persons) is either very limited or non-existent. Most building permit applications are for construction of single-family homes.
- The County housing stock is aging. Approximately 75% of it was constructed prior to 1989 and with almost one third of the total housing units constructed prior to 1959.
- The value of homes in the County is increasing. The estimated median home value in 2014 was \$263,700, up from \$207,900 in 2010.





***IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
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**People and Housing - Challenges and Opportunities 2030**

Given the historical population trends and the development constraints within the County (topography, water supply, septic system challenges, wetlands, floodplains, etc.), it is reasonable to continue to expect conservative growth in the future. Like many rural communities, Mathews County appears to be aging and losing youth to larger metropolitan areas. The loss of young adults also means decreases in the available labor workforce, as well as decreased numbers of children and young families. Mathews must find creative ways to attract and retain young persons in the future. A viable, sustainable community should be representative of all age groups and include native residents, as well as those from other areas.

Also, it is important to understand that each age group has associated demands for varying types of supporting goods and services; thus, there may be shifts required in business types and available services. Social demographics must be considered and business services carefully tailored to sufficiently meet the needs of residents and targeted populations; otherwise, the County loses economically and fails to nurture those that it wishes to retain or attract.

New residents are drawn to the coastal environment, but may not fully understand County culture or settlement patterns and may not be familiar with the true dynamics of living in a coastal community. Both new and existing residents must be educated about environmental factors and respect the ecological systems that have been an asset and part of the County's way of life for centuries. Since waterfront residential property presently contributes substantially to the tax base of the County, the challenge will be to manage future land development in an environmentally sensitive manner while balancing revenues and public investments and services.

Finally, seasonal residents should be a factor in future decisions. At present, there is limited information available on the number of persons moving to Mathews County during warmer months. Additional data should be collected in order to better define public service and safety needs, and to evaluate options for equitably funding any increased service levels.

With respect to housing, there should be more targeted efforts for encouraging clustered development in suitable areas. This approach can protect sensitive environmental areas and preserve open space for the benefit of residents and the community as a whole. Housing types can be diversified by utilizing this approach, as well. There are opportunities for encouraging workforce housing in some of the small hamlet areas of the County. These could include live-work spaces, second-story apartments, or small clusters of duplex, triplex or quadruplex units. Other options are to encourage the adaptive reuse and improvement of existing buildings for mixed-use commercial/ residential purposes and rehabilitation of vacant houses.

Both County Officials and citizens have expressed a need for age-restricted housing. This seems to make the most sense near a small village center, like Mathews, where there are supporting



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services and easy access to activities. Many residents of Mathews want an option to remain in the County in a quality independent and/or assisted living environment as they age.

**Planning/Development Policies, Action Strategies for People and Housing 2030**

The following planning and development policies and action strategies are established to achieve the desired vision for people and housing in Mathews County by 2030:

Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for People and Housing	
PH 1	<p>The neighborhoods of Mathews County are essential building blocks for the health and prosperity of the entire community. They should be carefully planned, designed, and maintained to complement the rural character of the County, protect sensitive environmental features, promote public safety, and provide quality living for all residents.</p>
	<p>1. Encourage grouped development for new housing subdivisions to preserve open space and the environment. Revise the Zoning Ordinance to allow flexibility in setbacks and site design for subdivisions to promote grouping of development. Key emphasis should be on environmental protection and common open space.</p>
	<p>2. Investigate the use of increased density, transfer of development rights <u>purchase of development rights</u>, or other <u>state</u> enabled development tools that can encourage grouped development or help achieve specific housing targets. Revise zoning ordinance, as appropriate.</p>
	<p>3. Identify "priority neighborhoods" that are experiencing decline, repeated flooding, or other threats to their stability. Seek out grant funding to survey housing conditions and undertake <u>hazard mitigation and/or</u> rehabilitation activities.</p>
	<p>4. Review and update zoning and subdivision regulations to reflect the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.</p>
	<p>5. Increase community awareness and education of the environmental issues associated with coastal living. Consider a variety of media communications, public announcements, series of speakers, school curricula, realtor packages, etc.</p>
PH 2	<p>Mathews' residents have long recognized the need for age-restricted independent and assisted living housing. Workforce housing is also needed.</p>
	<p>1. Assemble more definitive information on housing in the County (types,</p>





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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for People and Housing	
	value, condition, etc.). Include a housing survey of residents to identify specific needs. Consider applying for a housing rehabilitation planning grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.
	2. Promote a diversity of housing types and price ranges within new residential developments in order to provide greater housing opportunities to all residents. Ensure quality building designs and site development through careful review of proposals.
	3. Identify infrastructure requirements that would encourage for-profit and non-profit housing groups to develop independent living, assisted living and workforce housing in the County. Promote well-designed low-to medium-density housing options in the Mathews Court House area.
	4. Work with qualified private and public housing providers to address the County's housing needs.
	5. Encourage mixed-use housing and business development in the small commercial centers of the County by revising the zoning code to provide for upper-story housing above ground-floor commercial uses, live-work spaces, and other residential/commercial mixed uses.
PH 3	<b>Maintenance of the aging housing stock of the County is fundamental to the continued viability of its communities and neighborhoods. There must be careful monitoring of the housing stock through enforcement of the Uniform Statewide Building Code and assessment of environmental conditions to ensure public health, safety, and welfare.</b>
	1. Improve code compliance by conducting a field survey of properties in the county to identify structures that are subject to "spot blight" abatement measures. Work cooperatively with the Building Official and various County staff (planning, police, etc.) to develop a strategy to enhance building maintenance and achieve compliance.
PH 4	<b>Young persons and families are important to the future of Mathews County, particularly in helping to achieve a healthy balance in County population, continuing the community's heritage, and enriching the overall quality of life.</b>
	1. Work with the high school, area colleges, and other youth organizations



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for People and Housing	
	to identify opportunities to enhance the quality of life for young persons in Mathews County. Consider implementing special programs, initiatives, businesses, or events that may boost involvement of youth in the community.
	2. Work with area businesses to identify employment and training opportunities for youth with various levels of education and skills. Promote mentoring programs, on-the-job training, specialized programs in the schools, or other means of encouraging young people to continue to live and work in the County. Create focused marketing plan to target employers and potential employees.
	3. Encourage youth involvement in decision-making, particularly with respect to planning for the County and governmental activities. Consider adopting a youth government day that provides hands-on experience for high school seniors regarding local government operations and activities of public bodies.
	4. Increase workforce housing options for young adults and families. Encourage programs that assist in acquiring and improving existing residential structures. Encourage live-work space and second-story rental units above commercial spaces in the Mathews Court House area.
PH 5	<b>The seasonal population is important to the overall economy, health, and welfare of the County. Improved public facilities and services should serve permanent residents and seasonal visitors; such improvements should be financially structured to balance costs and benefits to taxpayers.</b>
	1. Develop a more accurate accounting of the number of seasonal residents and tourists visiting Mathews County. Use updated figures when considering public facility and service needs, especially as it may relate to responding to public health and safety.
	2. Consider funding options for addressing any increased public facility or service needs arising from seasonal residents. Ensure equitable treatment for seasonal residents regarding benefits and costs as County taxpayers.





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##### People and Housing: Special Action Projects

The neighborhoods and housing types of Mathews County are important to the future quality of life for residents and the overall sustainability of the community. The following are suggestions for projects that could move the County toward the goals for People and Housing.

##### Age-Restricted Housing Development

Officials and residents of Mathews County recognize the need to provide expanded housing opportunities for senior citizens. This could include a single independent housing development or various development options that provide a continuum of care from independent to assisted living to long-term care. One form of desired senior housing would enable residents to live independently and meet their changing lifestyles, while remaining close to supporting services. Opportunities for such a development exist in the Central Mathews District, near Mathews Court House. The development should complement the surrounding residential and business development, be developed using sound environmental design principles, and be of a suitable scale to fit the rural character of Mathews.



*An age-restricted development could be developed similar to the example shown here focusing on a grouping of units surrounding a common green. An interior courtyard would provide opportunities for activities or passive recreation. Typical community amenities would include interior sidewalks, landscaping, and designated guest parking.*







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**Economy**

The regional economy and the contributions and comparison of Mathews County to surrounding counties are discussed in the previous chapter, *Mathews County and the Region*. The following section provides additional insight into some economic factors of the County and how those factors may influence the County in the future.

**Labor Force and Employment**

In 2008, census economic statistics for the region indicated that health and social services, manufacturing and retail trade were the industries employing most persons. The most recent data for **2014** indicates that employment trends of Mathews County have changed; the largest employer is government, followed by retail trade and then accommodation and food services. Given the development patterns in the County with the County seat and a government center in Central Mathews and a focus on tourism, it is not surprising that these sectors are the most prominent.

In 2000, approximately 56% of Mathews' population over the age of 16 was in the labor force, which was less than that of the United States as a whole (64%). In 2008, the labor force had declined to approximately **48% of the County population however, rebounding to almost 54% in 2014**. The reduction in the available labor force is likely related to the aging of the population and the number of retired persons residing in the County.

In 2000, approximately 35% of Mathews' residents lived and worked in the County. **In 2014, a majority of workers (71%) commuted to an employer outside of Mathews County (mostly to Gloucester County, Newport News, and York County), averaging a 31-minute commute time. Approximately 21% of those employed in Mathews County commuted from outside the County (these were mostly residents of Gloucester and Middlesex Counties).**

**According to the Virginia Employment Commission, the average weekly wage in Mathews County as of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2015 was \$526. ; this equates to \$13.15 per hour or \$27,352 per year.**

Mathews County Labor Force and Employment Characteristics		
	2008	2013-2014
Persons in Labor Force (16 and over)	48%	53.7%
Average Weekly Wage	\$483	\$526
Per Capita Income	\$43,431	\$56,000
Work Commuting Patterns		
Lived & work in County		6%
Work outside County		71%
Live out, commute in		21%
Average commute time (mins)		31%
Source: U.S. Census, VA Workforce Connection, Virginia Employment Commission		





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According to the Virginia Employment Commission, the top fifty employers for Mathews County as of the second quarter of 2015 are listed in the following table. Most of the employers in the County are small businesses, employing less than twenty employees. The largest manufacturing employers were those in the textile trades and seafood.

**Mathews County**

**Economic Profile**

**50 Largest Employers**

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Mathews County School Board         | 26. Shore Stop Store                |
| 2. Brambles Inc                        | 27. VDOT                            |
| 3. Riverside Regional Medical Center   | 28. Moughons, Inc.                  |
| 4. Mathews County Board of Supervisors | 29. Postal Service                  |
| 5. Food Lion                           | 30. Boys & Girls Clubs of the       |
| 6. Star Fields LLC                     | 31. Chesapeake Bank                 |
| 7. Sea Farms                           | 32. R & W Marine Construction       |
| 8. Zimmerman Marine                    | 33. The Medicine Shoppe             |
| 9. Hardee's                            | 34. 7-Eleven                        |
| 10. Best Value Supermarket             | 35. Dolgencorp LLC                  |
| 11. Mobjack Nurseries                  | 36. East River Construction Inc     |
| 12. Richardson's Cafe                  | 37. M & M Building Supply           |
| 13. Tatterson Greenhouses              | 38. Morse Enterprises, Inc.         |
| 14. Peninsula Metropolitan YMCA        | 39. Mrs Georgiana R Simmons         |
| 15. Southwind Cafe                     | 40. P. Buckley Moss Galleries Ltd.  |
| 16. Mathews Volunteer Rescue           | 41. Subway                          |
| 17. Island Seafood Company             | 42. The Island Stop                 |
| 18. Ocean Products Research            | 43. Ambrose Lawncare LLC            |
| 19. Ambrose Disposal Service Inc       | 44. Cobbs Creek Body Works Division |
| 20. Msc Development Inc                | 45. Doziers Auto Parts Inc          |
| 21. Chimney Corner Lawnmower           | 46. Foster Faulkner Funeral Home    |
| 22. Covansys                           | 47. Linda's Diner                   |
| 23. Lynne's Family Restaurant          | 48. Seabreeze Restaurant            |
| 24. Mathews Co Dept of Social Service  | 49. Bank of America                 |
| 25. Mathew's Yacht Club                | 50. Bay Construction & Gutter Inc   |

Source: Virginia Employment Commission,  
Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 2nd Quarter (April, May, June) 2015.



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**Agriculture and Forests**

In general, Mathews County can be described as a rural county with large tracts of forests, open fields and expansive shorelines. These economic sectors are summarized in the following tables and paragraphs. Although these segments of the economy have declined over the years, there may be future potential to improve management practices and expand the economic development potential for these natural amenities.

In 2007, agricultural lands contributed approximately \$3 million in production value to the local economy. The number of farms has slightly increased over the past five years, along with the production value.

In 2005, forests accounted for approximately two-thirds of County land. Figures for 2007 timber were approximately \$250,000.

Mathews County Agriculture			
Item	2002	2007	2012
Farms	<u>47</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>55</u>
Land in Farms (acres)		<u>4,412</u>	<u>4,646</u>
Avg. Size Farm (acres)		<u>88</u>	<u>84</u>
Market Value Production	<u>\$4.3M</u>	<u>\$3.0M</u>	<u>\$3.18 M</u>
Crop Production	<u>\$4.0M</u>	<u>2.6M</u>	<u>\$2.4 M</u>
Livestock, Poultry Production	<u>\$0.3 M</u>	<u>\$0.4 M</u>	<u>\$0.17 M</u>
Source: USDA, 2012 Census of Agriculture County Data			
Mathews County Forests			
Forests (Privately owned, 2005)	62% of county		
Production Value (Avg. 1986-2001)	\$416,325		
Production Value (2007)	\$249,000		
Source: VA Dept. of Forestry			

**Maritime Industry**

A part of Mathews County economy is its rich and traditional maritime industry. In 2012 maritime related businesses provided 1.4 percent of the total jobs in Mathews County. This is an 83% decrease since 2005. In 2012, maritime jobs in Mathews County accounted for 21 employees and \$456,000 in wages and \$813,000 in goods and services.

According to National Oceanic Atmospheric Association 2012 Coastal snapshot, marine construction is the predominant sector in Mathews County's maritime industry.





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### Maritime Jobs Snapshot

# Mathews County, Virginia

COASTAL COUNTY SNAPSHOTS  
[www.coast.noaa.gov/snapshots/](http://www.coast.noaa.gov/snapshots/)

#### Maritime Jobs = A Healthy Economy

In 2012, maritime-related businesses provided 1.4% of the total jobs in Mathews County. This represents a 83% decrease in maritime jobs since 2005. Nationwide, maritime jobs represent double the number of jobs supported by agriculture.

#### Mathews County maritime jobs account for

21 employees	\$456k in wages in 2012	\$813k in goods & services
-----------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------------

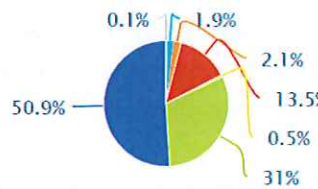
#### Maritime Jobs by Sector

Comparing Mathews County's maritime sectors to the state and nation shows how local concerns may or may not coincide with state and national priorities.

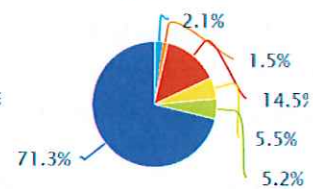
#### Mathews County



#### Virginia



#### Nation



#### Mathews County Percentages



#### Job Trends

When making coastal management decisions, it is important to understand how the six sectors have changed over time.

#### Mathews County Percent Changes



#### Percent Change in Jobs



#### Number of Jobs Gained or Lost



#### County and National Wages

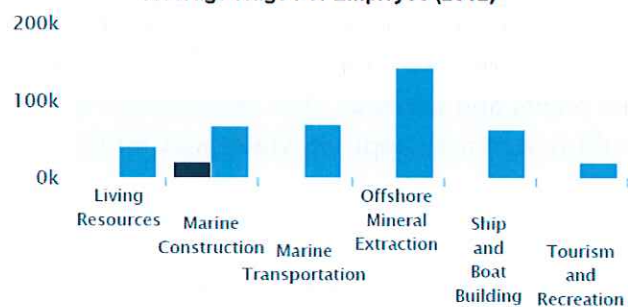
Higher local wages can be attractive to employees but a deterrent to new or expanding businesses. Managers should consider cost of living rates when making this comparison.

#### Impact of Part-time Workers

Average tourism wages can be smaller due to the high percentage of part-time workers, but total tourism wages are often among the highest because of the large number of people employed.

■ County ■ National

#### Average Wage Per Employee (2012)





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**Aquaculture and Fisheries**

The aquatic resources of Mathews are of substantial environmental and economic value to the County and the Commonwealth of Virginia. According to a 2005 report by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)<sup>4</sup> the commercial and recreational fisheries of Virginia provide both monetary and non-monetary economic and recreational contributions. In 2005, sport fishing and commercial harvesting activities generated a total of \$1.23 billion in output or sales, \$717.4 million in value-added contributions or income, and 13,015 full and part-time jobs for Virginia. Of note is that approximately two-thirds of these values were attributable to the recreational sector and one-third to the commercial seafood sector. In addition, it is important to recognize that the values attributed to commercial seafood sector declined approximately 30% between 1994 and 2004 as a result of decreased species diversity, infrastructure damages from Hurricane Isabel in 2003, increased fuel costs, and imported products, among others. The largest sales for the seafood industry were from sea scallops, blue crabs, and menhaden and approximately 50% of the economic impacts were generated by seafood processing.

For Mathews County, the 2005 study indicated that the commercial seafood industry represented approximately \$2.5 million in landings; in contrast, recreational fishing generated approximately \$10.4 million (\$3.9 million in income and \$6.5 million in sales) and 138 full or part-time jobs.

Updated economic reports in 2007 and 2008 on Virginia's shellfish aquaculture<sup>5</sup> indicate continued growth of the shellfish aquaculture industry. The studies documented increases in the cultured Virginia hard clams (*Mercenaria mercenaria*) and the culturing of disease resistant native Eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*). Specifically from the 2008 Outlook Report, predictions indicate that within the Middle Peninsula there will be a 46% increase in the number of cultured market oysters sold, a 10% decline in oyster seed planted, and a 23% increase in the number of eyed larvae planted by 2009. The 2008 findings also showed an increased growth in oyster aquaculture almost twice that of 2007 with both clam and oyster sales generating approximately \$26.9 million. In fact, Virginia is number one in farmed clam production. The continued health and expansion of shellfish aquaculture will be dependent on good water quality and strong environmental stewardship to maintain it.

Aquaculture generally refers to the raising of fish and shellfish. Over the years, aquaculture practices have become more complex, ranging from freshwater to marine and specializing in various plants and animals. The chart on the following page summarizes the various forms of aquaculture as it may apply to Mathews County.

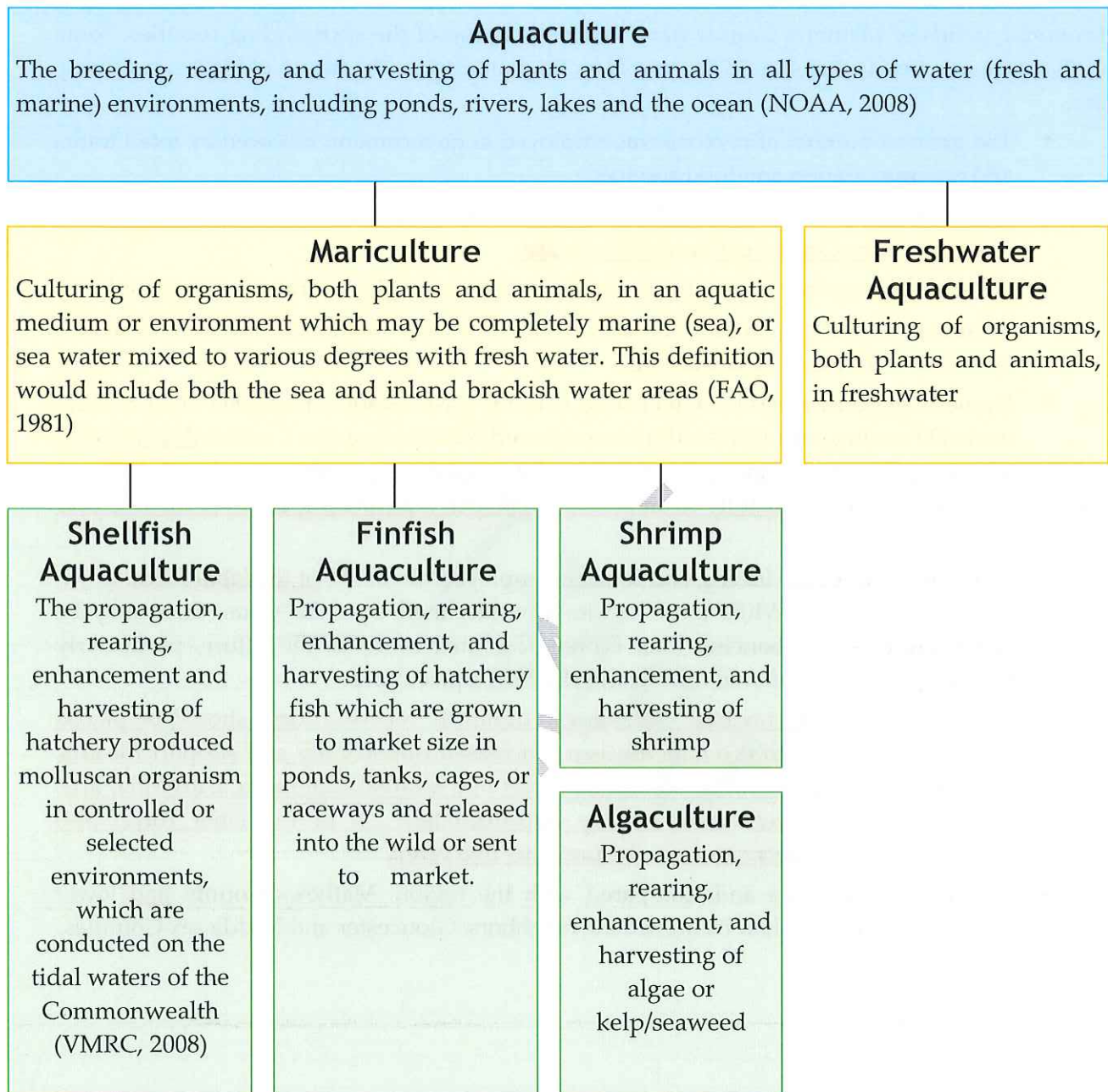
<sup>4</sup> Virginia Institute of Marine Science - Kirkley, Murray and Duberg. December 2005. *Economic Contributions of Virginia's Commercial Seafood and Recreational Fishing Industries: A User's Manual for Assessing Economic Impacts*.

<sup>5</sup> Virginia Institute of Marine Science - Murray and Oesterling. June 2007, June 2009. *Virginia Shellfish Aquaculture Situation and Outlook Report, Results of Virginia Shellfish Aquaculture Crop Reporting Survey 2005-2007 and 2007-2008*.





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*Aquaculture Summary Chart Prepared by Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, 2009.*



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**Economic Trends for Mathews County**

Economic trends of Mathews County have varied from that of the surrounding counties. Some of the economic trends that should be considered in planning for the future of Mathews County are:

- The greatest number of persons was employed in government, followed by retail trade, and accommodation and food services.
- The available labor force in Mathews County is decreasing while the number of retired residents in the County continues to increase.
- Most businesses in the County are small businesses, employing twenty people or less.
- Businesses employing more than twenty persons were manufacturing establishments affiliated with textiles and seafood.
- Home-based businesses have increased over the past decade. From 2003 to 2008, there were 429 zoning permits issued for home-based businesses in the County. According to Mathews County Planning Department, the number of permits issued from 2011 to 2015 decreased significantly to an average of 30 per year totaling 150 over the five year span.
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting employed about 4% of the labor force, down 1 percent in 2015. While these sectors have declined over the years, there may be opportunities for enhancing their economic contributions in the future, particularly with respect to recreational fishing and shellfish aquaculture.
- As Mathews County tax base continues to diminish, renewed focus should be placed on innovative ways to promote tourism. Increased opportunity and support for arts, entertainment and recreation should be a part of a strategic approach. Currently, arts, entertainment and recreation employ approximately 2% of the labor force, also experiencing a 1 % decrease from the previous five years.
- Visitor's expenditures and Compared with the region, Mathews County had lower visitor expenditures than its immediate neighbors, Gloucester and Middlesex Counties.





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##### Economic Challenges and Opportunities 2030

In order to sustain the quality of life in the County and achieve its vision for an economy that is focused on eco-tourism and heritage agricultural and maritime trade, there must be a carefully constructed strategy for enhancing these industry sectors. Integrating protection and management of the natural resources that provide the baseline for these industries must be a key element of the strategy. Another important factor for success will be having a sufficient number of supporting industries, such as retail trade, accommodations, and entertainment.

Tourism statistics for the region and those of the state indicate that there are opportunities for Mathews County to increase its market share in eco-tourism as well as capitalize from various revenue sources that are not currently being explored. The opportunity for increased services and accommodations can also potentially increase the County's revenue.

The shorelines of the County provide opportunities for increased aquaculture and aquatic-based businesses; however, these endeavors will require careful land use management to protect both the environment and businesses. Creativity, exemplary leadership, and multiple public-private partnerships will be needed to understand the complex, ecological dynamics and to educate officials, businesses, and the public.

Mathews County is constrained for development because of its topography and its proximity to surface water. This is further complicated by a lack of utility infrastructure for water and sewer. Consequently, the locations where development can occur with few constraints must be carefully planned to ensure that they are developed using best development practices and in the wisest manner with respect to land use and density. This will require careful choices to achieve a successful and balanced economy that is able to sustain the quality of life desired in Mathews County.

##### *2030 Vision for Mathews*

*"County farms delight consumers and restaurant owners with local products, while area merchants and artisans welcome patrons with quality, creative offerings in services, products, and arts and crafts.*

*Forestry, fishery and ecotourism opportunities offer residents quality employment and wages while integrating sustainable business practices that protect and renew natural resources.*

*Seasonal visitors who appreciate Mathews' traditional heritage and natural environment are attracted to the County.*

*Eco-friendly enterprises – aquaculture, maritime museums, marinas, sailing schools, sea farms, kayak farms, boat tours – concentrate economic activities on the water.*

*Home-based businesses thrive on expanded Internet services and distribute Mathews' products worldwide.*

*Business enterprises offer quality services in appropriate locations, living-wage employment, limited environmental impact, and quality revenue contributions to the community."*



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**Planning/Development Policies, Action Strategies for Economy 2030**

The following planning and development policies and action strategies are established to achieve the desired vision for the future economy of Mathews County:

Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Economy	
E 1	<p>The economy of Mathews County is linked to and dependent on the quality of the environment. Public decisions on land development and economic investment should be based on careful study of environmental impact, both short and long-term.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an environmental information package and assessment check-list for developers that can be used by applicants and by County representatives when considering development and rezoning applications. Include agency resources and contact information. Update regularly.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Continue to monitor and report environmental quality on at least an annual basis. Work with the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission and other environmental organizations to actively address environmental challenges that may affect the economy and quality of life.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Identify and evaluate sensitive environmental areas and specific waterfront and inland land uses that may adversely affect water quality, environmental assets and long-term water-based economy. Use best management practices to resolve land use conflicts.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Revise land development regulations to better manage land uses in waterfront areas and protect environmental quality. Provide public education and opportunities for public comment and input to ensure workable solutions.</li> </ol>
E 2	<p>Mathews County has a proud, traditional heritage in water-based businesses. Increased efforts should be undertaken to enhance this sector of the local and regional economy.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clarify, define and pursue County authority to regulate and manage land uses beyond the physical land area and shorelines, extending to include territorial boundaries over the water.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <del>Identify new or preserve existing sites for aquaculture and working waterfront businesses. Establish an Economic Development Team to ensure communication among interests, target compatible land/water uses, and adopt minimum development standards (e.g., Aquaculture Best Management Practices). Develop an economic development strategy that</del></li> </ol>





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	<del>can be updated on an annual basis. Work with the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, and other environmental agencies. Consider <u>state and local financial incentives for aquaculture businesses that could assist their development (e.g. special loans, tax incentives, grants, etc.)</u></del>
	3. <del>Develop and pursue designation of aquaculture opportunity zone(s) as a financial incentive to promote aquaculture and encourage investment. Adopt applicable local incentives and taxation options to promote aquaculture.</del> Strengthen regulations to encourage and protect aquaculture in appropriate areas of the County.
	4. Lobby general assembly for special aquaculture land use taxation category specific to aquaculture and water-based businesses, similar to agriculture land use taxation, to encourage continued use and production of important properties and operations.
	5. Educate the public regarding the importance of aquaculture and working waterfronts to the community, region and the state. Develop a brochure, webpage article, or other form of communication to promote increased understanding of water-based business operations and requirements, as well as the need for excellent water quality. Work with businesses and governmental agencies to coordinate efforts and improve communication of important coastal living issues and future goals and outcomes.
	6. Affirm the commitment of the County to protect the working waterfront as a priority for economic development and preserving coastal character. Improve communication regarding pending development matters, water quality monitoring/reporting, water access, etc. Consider appropriate "good neighbor practices" that enable shared information and communication regarding development activities.
	7. Consider adopting a formal resolution/policy that promotes and protects working waterfronts in Mathews County.
E 3	<b>Tourism is an important economic sector for Mathews County that should be encouraged and supported as an economic development strategy.</b>
	1. Develop a tourism strategy, updated annually, in cooperation with the Mathews Visitor and Information Center (MCVIC), and supporting



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	businesses and organizations. Collaborate with MCVIC to develop educational materials that promote environmental stewardship. Support marketing and other outreach efforts by MCVIC, <u>Mathews Main Street, Discover Mathews Business Group</u> and others to attract tourists to the County. <u>Continue to promote the “Be Here” branding/marketing campaign endorsed by the Board of Supervisors through various media.</u>
	2. Encourage development of conference/lodging/ <u>event</u> facilities in selected locations with water access. Ensure environmental compatibility with the area.
	3. Encourage further development of bed and breakfast establishments and <u>short-term vacation rental units</u> in the County. <u>Revise zoning code to include appropriate standards for site development and management, parking, and accessory uses.</u>
	4. Encourage the development of additional outdoor recreation businesses such as canoe/kayak rental, <u>bicycle rentals</u> and guided tour services that utilize the Blueways Trail. <u>Promote the use of Put-in Creek Park kayak/canoe launch located in the Historic Courthouse Area.</u>
E 4	Many of the Mathews County Planning Areas have small business centers that are valued by residents of the County for support services. These “community commerce centers” should complement the economy of the larger County and be carefully managed to ensure convenient, essential services, while enhancing community character and the environment.
	1. Encourage carefully designed business and mixed-use development in existing community commerce centers (village, hamlet and crossroad areas) where public utilities are available. <u>Businesses and services should focus on the needs of the aging population, tourist base and the young working population.</u>
	2. Promote the use of local businesses for goods and services. Maintain a business guide of local merchants and products and distribute it to residents on a regular basis (e.g., County bulletins, utility notices, etc.).
	3. Promote and encourage specialty arts and crafts businesses in commercial centers. Support a Mathews for the Arts Committee to coordinate and market artisan efforts and events. Work with Bay School Cultural Arts Center, Mathews Art Group, area schools, and other educational





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	institutions to promote the arts and nurture artisan skills.
	4. <u>Real estate is a major tax revenue generator for the County. With the increase in the aging population and a need to diversify the demographic makeup, more diverse housing choices and recreational amenities should be considered to help expand the existing tax base as well as promote the tourist industry.</u>
	5. Encourage home-based business development that enriches the overall economy of the County while protecting the residential integrity of surrounding properties. Update the zoning ordinance to meet requirements for enabling modern day small businesses, while ensuring protection of residential character.
	6. Encourage and pursue expansion of high-speed internet service throughout the County. Ensure careful design and placement of facilities to protect visual quality and the environment. Focus initial efforts in governmental and community commerce centers.
	7. Involve young adults in working with local businesses (internships, on-the-job training, after-school work, etc.) to encourage retention after graduation. Partner with area schools and colleges for special training programs to enhance local business services. Host special events in the community commerce centers oriented toward youth.
	8. <u>Expand the use of Put-in Creek by adding a pavilion structure on the site as a location for the sale of produce, seafood, baked goods and arts and crafts.</u>
E 5	Many existing commercial buildings in Mathews County have historic significance or architectural features that are in scale with or complement the built environment. Adaptive reuse of existing commercial buildings should be considered prior to considering demolition and redevelopment.
	1. Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant/underutilized commercial structures throughout the County. Consider use of historic tax credits, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, or other financial incentives to eliminate blighting conditions and improve commercial properties.



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	2. <u>Solicit the involvement of the Mathews County Economic Development Authority and others in funding the purchase of existing buildings in the Courthouse Business District Area that could be adapted for use as a "business incubator" or other form of business development entity.</u>
E 6	The economy of Mathews County should be diversified to the extent possible to provide quality job opportunities for residents, while also providing sufficient goods and services.
	1. Encourage and cultivate diverse forms of small business or clean industry. Target sectors suitable for the area such as arts & crafts, organic produce, flex office/business, plant nurseries and seafood.
	2. Establish a permanent venue for music performances and festivals by local artists as a means of stimulating the local economy.

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